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Brian R Naranjo 02/05/2002 05:56:00 PM From DB/Inbox: Brian R Naranjo

Cable Text:
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TELEGRAM

February 05, 2002

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)

To: SECSTATE WASHDC - ROUTINE
Action: INR
From: AMEMBASSY CARACAS (CARACAS 314 - ROUTINE)
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, VE
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: A DAY OF CELEBRATION, AND MOURNING
Ref: None

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1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Venezuelans expressed themselves differently during the tenth anniversary of President Chavez's failed coup attempt on February 4: Chavez supporters wore red and attended a boisterous rally headed by their beloved leader; Chavez opponents wore black, attended memorial masses, and, of course, banged on pots and pans. Chavez announced that a military coup "won't be able to overturn me."

END SUMMARY.

THE RED AND THE BLACK

2. (U) President Chavez headed a day's worth of ceremonies on February 4 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of his failed coup attempt, which he claims as "the founding anniversary" of his Bolivarian Republic. In the evening, his red-clad followers filled the El Proceres Boulevard near the Fuerte Tiuna military base for the usual boisterous rally. During the speechifying, militant Chavista Freddy Bernal announced: "To those that say we are Talibanes, we answer no, because the Taliban surrendered, and the Bolivarian People will never surrender." At a press conference, Chavez likewise threw down the gauntlet: "A military coup will never overturn me."

3. (U) Chavez's evening cadena was uncompromising and included warnings, instructions, and denunciations of all the usual suspects:

- The media were warned to stop printing lies;
- The "Escualidos" were warned to stop believing their own lies;
- The Bolivarian people were told not to buy a single copy of El Nacional or El Universal until those papers corrected themselves and shifted to constructive criticism;
- The bishops of the Catholic Church, and specifically Cardinal Velasco, were warned to return to God and join the people in the streets;
- Ex-President Carlos Andres Perez (not mentioned by name) was to return to Venezuela to face judgment;
- Overseas interests were to cease funding Fedecamaras.

4. (U) Meanwhile, Chavez's opponents wore elegant black--or, in some cases, tee shirts with the

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logo "I am an Escualido"---and treated February 4 as a day of mourning. A mass at the Caracas Cathedral commemorated those killed in the coup attempt. As usual, pot banging by anti-Chavistas accompanied Chavez's speech.

5. (U) After Chavez finished his cadena, Globovision cut to a tape, recorded at 10 PM, of demonstrators conducting a cacerolazo at La Casona, the Presidential residence. The crowd was in the parking lot, knocking on the protocol entrance of the palace. Although there were at least dozens of people on hand, it was impossible to make any accurate estimate of their numbers.

Hrinak.

Additional Addressees:
None

cc:

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AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL, DGOV, VE
SUBJ: A DAY OF CELEBRATION, AND MOURNING

End Cable Text

Brian R Naranjo 02/05/2002 05:58:00 PM From DB/Inbox: Brian R Naranjo

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